

Author: Schuppli, Catherine A.**Source:** [Anthrozoos: A Multidisciplinary Journal of The Interactions of People & Animals](#), Volume 24, Number 4, December 2011, pp. 409-425(17)**Publisher:** [Berg Publishers](#)[< previous article](#) | [view table of contents](#) | [next article >](#)

Buy & download fulltext article:

[Add to cart](#)

OR

[Buy now](#)**Price: \$32.99 plus tax** ([Refund Policy](#))Or [sign up for a free trial](#)[Mark item](#)[Free trial available!](#)**Abstract:**

Institutional Animal Ethics Committees (AECs) are the principal means of ensuring the ethical use of animals in science in many countries, yet we understand very little about how they make decisions and how effective they are in implementing policy and achieving their stated aims. To answer these questions, an ethnographic study involving participant observation and in-depth interviews with 28 members of four university AECs in western Canada was carried out. The major focus of protocol review by committee members was reducing harm to animals, with less focus on the ethical justification of research despite this being stressed in policy as a goal of AECs. In part, this may be due to confusion over the relation between AEC review and scientific peer review by granting agencies, with some members believing that ethical justification is decided by scientific peer review. Members were also unclear on the distinction between the different elements that go into decisions about ethical justification. Use of harm-benefit assessment, although prescribed by policy, did not cover the various other decision-making approaches that members described using (moral intuition, empathy with animals etc.). Thus, policy may invalidate how some (especially non-scientist) members naturally make decisions. AEC effectiveness could be improved by clarifying the elements of harm-benefit assessments and the relation between AEC and scientific peer review, keeping in mind that peer review does not offer the same assurances (notably community input) that the AEC brings. Effectiveness could be improved by expanding policy to acknowledge the various approaches used in decision-making.

Keywords: [ANIMAL ETHICS COMMITTEES](#); [DECISION-MAKING](#); [ETHICS REVIEW](#); [HARM-BENEFIT ANALYSIS](#); [INTERVIEWS](#)**Document Type:** Research article**DOI:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/175303711X13159027359980>

Publication date: 2011-12-01

[More about this publication?](#)[Related content](#)

Website © 2011 Publishing Technology. Article copyright remains with the publisher, society or author(s) as specified within the article.